

*The FBI is increasing its presence in response to a rise in gang activity*

Hauppauge, NY –Rep. Steve Israel (D – Huntington) and the FBI’s Special Agent in Charge (SAC) George C. Venizelos, met with community leaders, elected officials and law enforcement from Brentwood, Central Islip, Huntington Station, North Amityville and Wyandanch to discuss the FBI’s increased presence on Long Island and strategies for combating gang violence.

“Two weeks ago, I met with senior FBI officials in Washington. They committed significant focus and resources in response to growing gang activities in Suffolk County. They’re increased presence has already been felt and it’s essential that we continue enhancing coordination with all local law enforcement and community partners. That is why I asked them for tonight’s briefing,” Rep. Israel said. “Local crime is the fundamental responsibility of the Suffolk County Police Department and I understand that. However, where crime is committed by gangs that cross county and state lines, the FBI has an important role to play. They have been very responsive.”

“We come together this evening with a common purpose and a mutual concern for the well-being of our youth, our society, and the strength of our communities. The FBI has worked extensively with our partners from the Suffolk County Police Department, local officials, and community leaders to address the rise in violent gang activity throughout Long Island. Cooperation with our local law enforcement partners will be sustained as we continue to provide additional resources and support to this growing problem,” SAC Venizelos said.

Gangs have fueled a spike in violent robberies and assaults in Suffolk County. The total number of armed robberies, shootings, stabbings and serious beatings increased in Suffolk in 2009 and 2010, while figures from the state Division of Criminal Justice Services also show guns are increasingly being used in those attacks. The Suffolk County Police Department’s gun suppression task force and anti-gang team have been responding to the rise in violence.

Rep. Israel reached out to the FBI to ask for their assistance and coordination in responding to the increase in gang activity. The FBI is committing additional resources to fight the gang problem in Suffolk County communities. The FBI has an established anti-gang task force operating on Long Island and recently briefed the Congressman, Assemblyman Phil Ramos and State Senator Brian Foley about the FBI’s efforts on Long Island.

Rep. Israel serves on the House Appropriations Committee.